THE TALE OF MOMOTARO IN OKAYAMA

KIBITSUHIKO AND URA

Written by Reiko Amura
Illustrated by Shogo Natsume

岡山県立図書館
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Kibiji Guidebook

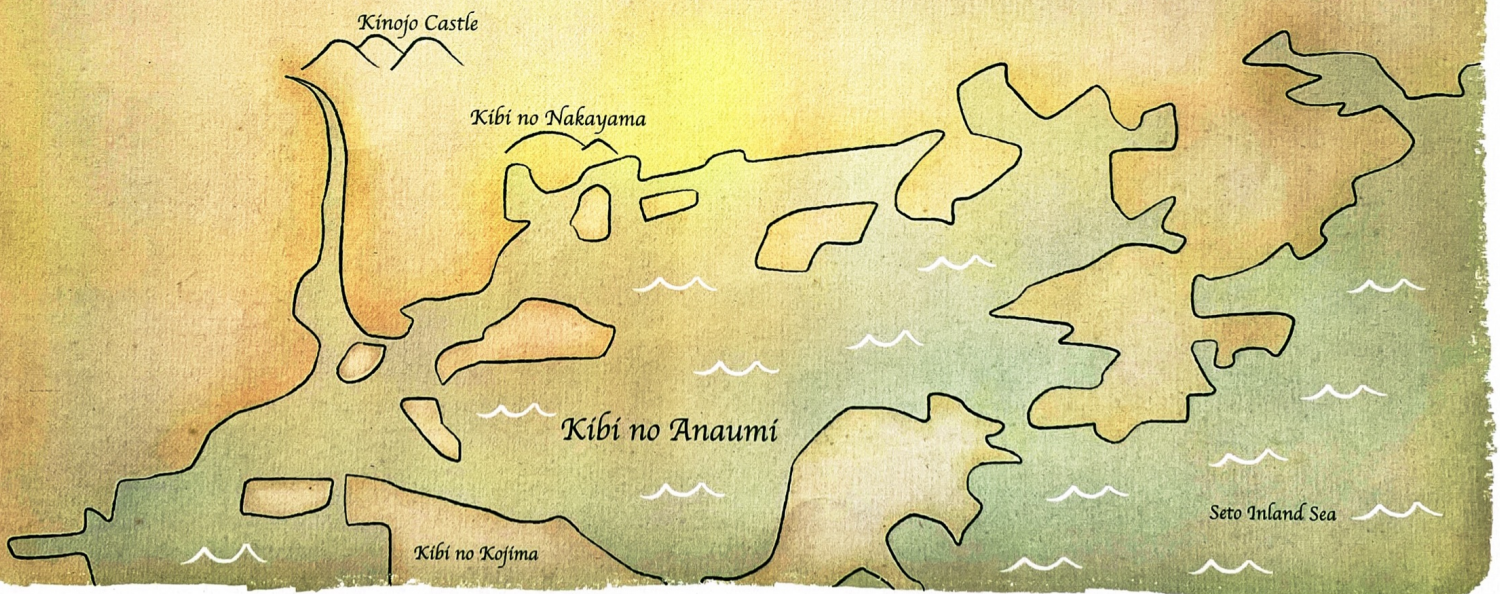
A stroll through Kibiji with the Tale of Momotaro

A long, long time ago
when the Okayama Plain was still an inland sea called
Kibi no Anaumi and surrounded by the island of Kibi no Kojima...
it was said that there existed a region called Kibi Province
in Okayama, which at the time was as powerful
as the provinces of Kinai and Izumo.

Kibiji, at one time believed to be at the heart of Kibi Province,
is the place where "The Tale of Momotaro" originated,
and many place names and historic ruins associated with
"Momotaro" still remain today.

Let's take a stroll around Kibiji
while following this tale which has been passed down
through the generations from time immemorial.

The numbers attached to the sentences in the tale are linked to
the sightseeing map at the end of the booklet.
We hope you'll enjoy the tale along with the sightseeing information.



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Kibiji Guidebook

KIBITSUHIKO AND URA

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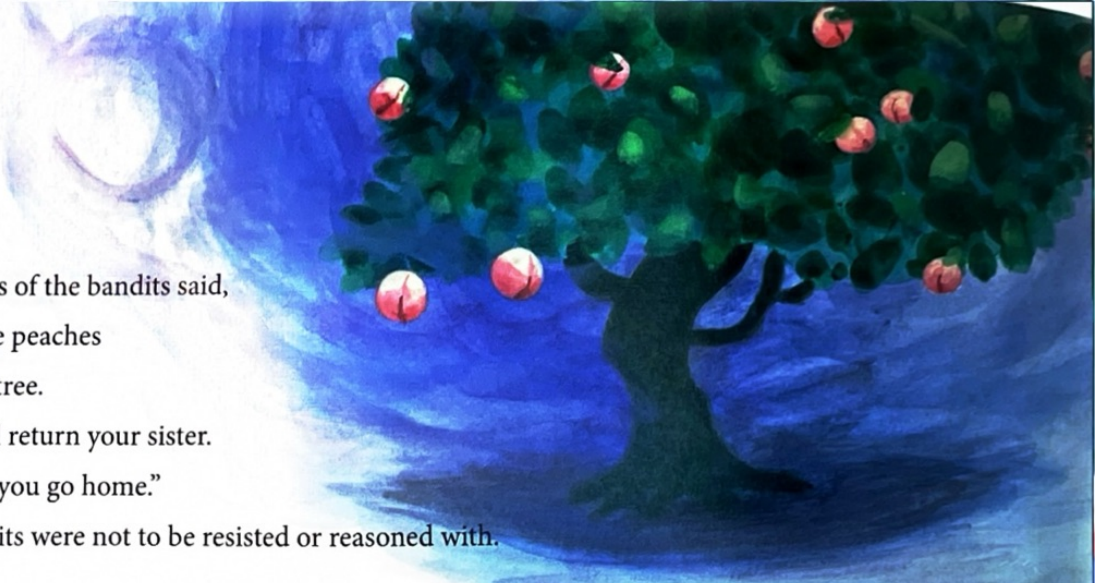
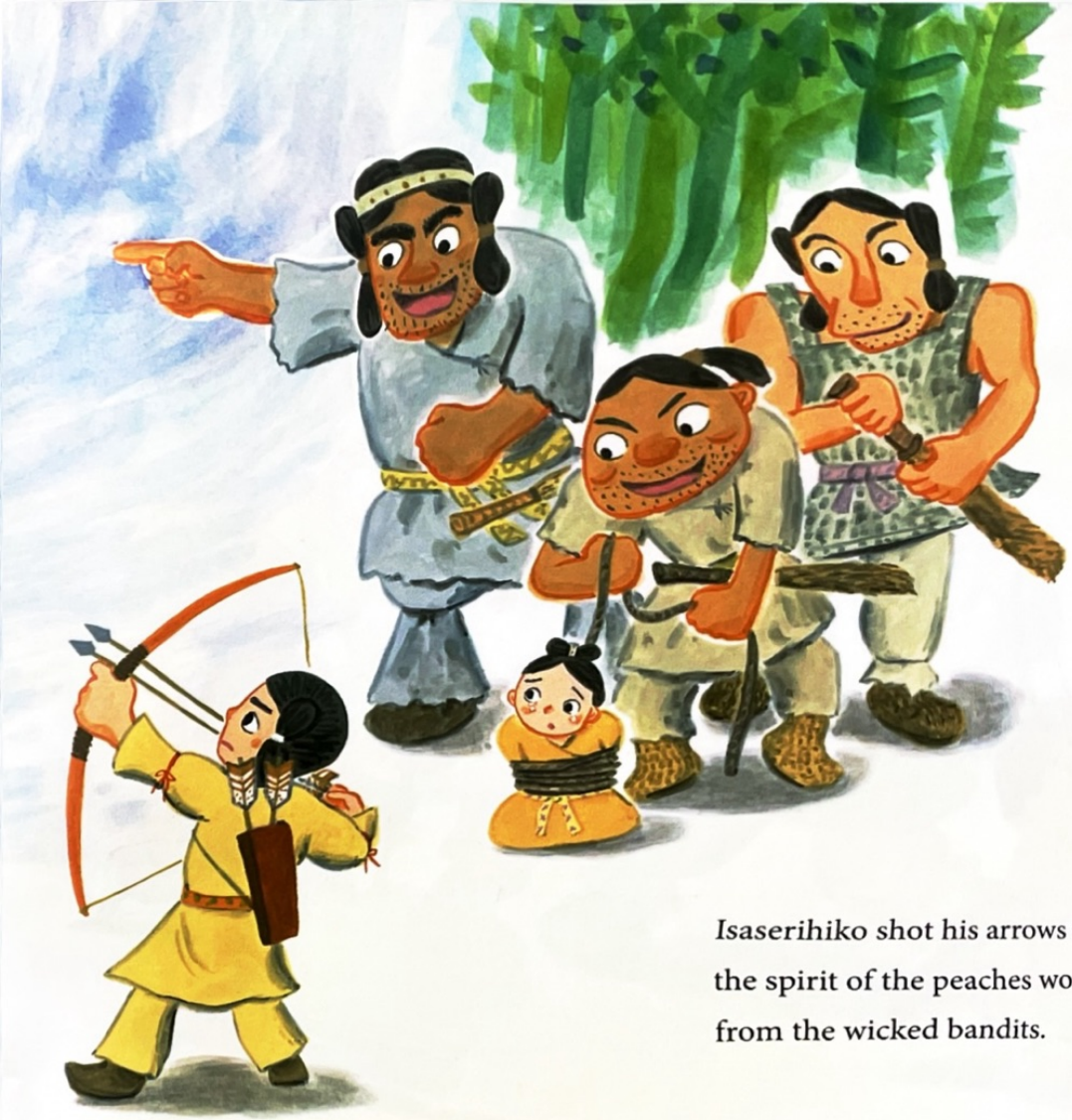
A long, long time ago,
before this country was unified,
there was a Prince named Isaserihiko
who lived in Yamato Province.
Even at the young age of ten,
Isaserihiko was an extremely clever boy,
and his archery skills rivaled that of any adult.

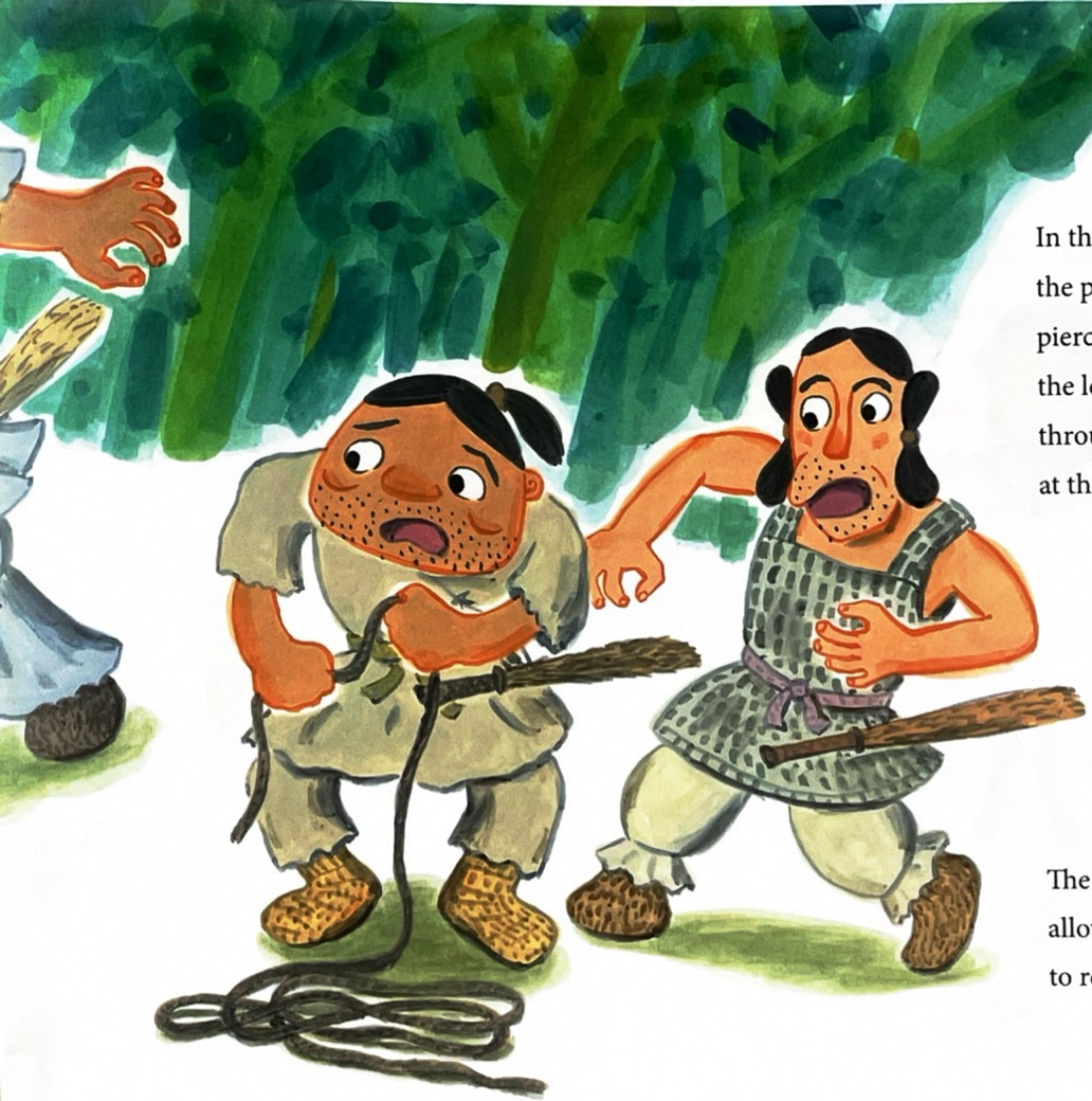
One day, when his sister was abducted by bandits,
Isaserihiko picked up his bow and arrow and
went alone to where the bandits lived.



When Isaserihiko demanded that
his sister be returned to him, the boss of the bandits said,
"Use your bow and arrow to hit those peaches
that are hanging side by side on that tree.
If you hit the peach on the right, we'll return your sister.
Hit the peach on the left and we'll let you go home."
It was a deceptive wager but the bandits were not to be resisted or reasoned with.
Isaserihiko thought very hard.
He came up with the idea of secretly placing two arrows on his bow and slightly adjusting
the arrowheads to hit both the peaches on the left and right.
He thought, "If I aim for the middle of the two peaches, I should be able to hit both of them.
But, if I miss, both my sister and I will never be able to leave this place...."
Isaseriko's hand trembled as he held his bow.
At that moment, the words of a certain man who came from Kibi Province to present peaches as a gift to his
father crossed his mind.
"Peaches possess the power to ward off evil.
It is by virtue of our peaches that our province is blessed with bounties from the mountains to the sea,
and our people live in peace."



Isaserihiko shot his arrows with the belief that the spirit of the peaches would protect him from the wicked bandits.



In the next instant, one arrow hit the peach on the right and the other pierced though the pit of the peach on the left, and took it soaring through the sky to land with a thud at the feet of the bandits.

The bandits were bewildered and allowed both Isaserihiko and his sister to return home as promised.

Isaserihiko took the pits from the peaches he shot with his arrows that day and carried them home with care.

He planted one of the pits in front of the gate of his estate and watered and cared for it by himself as it grew.

He carried the other around with him near his chest everyday as a good luck charm.

To Isaserihiko, peaches were his guardian angels.

He also held a special place in his heart for Kibi Province from where peaches had been introduced to his province.

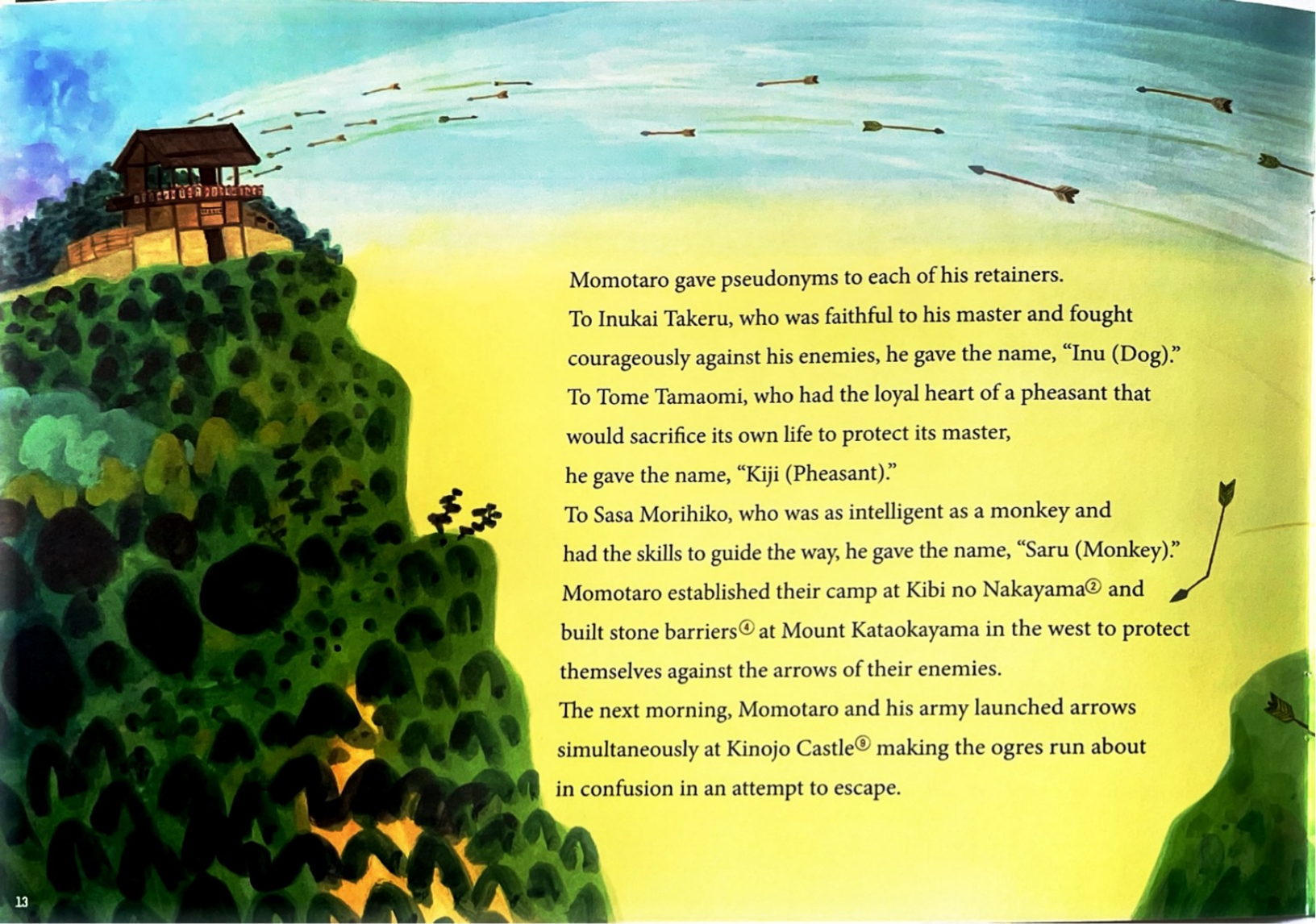
From this point on, the people of Yamato Province began to call him "Momotaro" (Peach Taro).

The name Momotaro, together with the story of him winning the wager against the bandits, travelled far and wide and even reached Kibi Province.

Ten years later, Momotaro matured into a strong young man and he grew even more skillful with his bow and arrow.

"It appears that fearsome ogres are running rampant in Kibi Province and attacking the villagers."
This was a rumor that reached the people of Yamato Province one day.
According to reports, all the ogres were incredibly large, and the leader called "Ura" was a fierce sight, measuring about four meters in height, with glaring red eyes and curly red hair.
These ogres who lived at the top of Mount Niiyama in Bicchu[8], were said to rob and plunder ships that sailed the seas, and kidnap the women and children in the village whom they boiled in an iron pot and devoured.
It was said that the villagers who called the castle in which the ogres lived, Kinojo Castle, were all trembling with fear.

"Father, please let me go to defeat those ogres.
Kibi Province is a place that I hold dear to my heart
for introducing peaches to our province.
I cannot just allow the ogres to destroy their land."
"Well said. I have faith that you will be able to
defeat and kill the ogres."
His father, the great king, supplied Momotaro with
a magnificent bow and arrows, the best retainers,
then sent him on his way.



Momotaro gave pseudonyms to each of his retainers.
To Inukai Takeru, who was faithful to his master and fought courageously against his enemies, he gave the name, "Inu (Dog)."
To Tome Tamaomi, who had the loyal heart of a pheasant that would sacrifice its own life to protect its master, he gave the name, "Kiji (Pheasant)."
To Sasa Morihiko, who was as intelligent as a monkey and had the skills to guide the way, he gave the name, "Saru (Monkey)."
Momotaro established their camp at Kibi no Nakayama② and built stone barriers④ at Mount Kataokayama in the west to protect themselves against the arrows of their enemies.
The next morning, Momotaro and his army launched arrows simultaneously at Kinojo Castle⑨ making the ogres run about in confusion in an attempt to escape.

桃太郎

A duel started between
Momotaro and Ura.
Oddly, all the arrows shot by
Momotaro and Ura collided
in the sky and fell to
the ground at Yaguinomiya⑧.

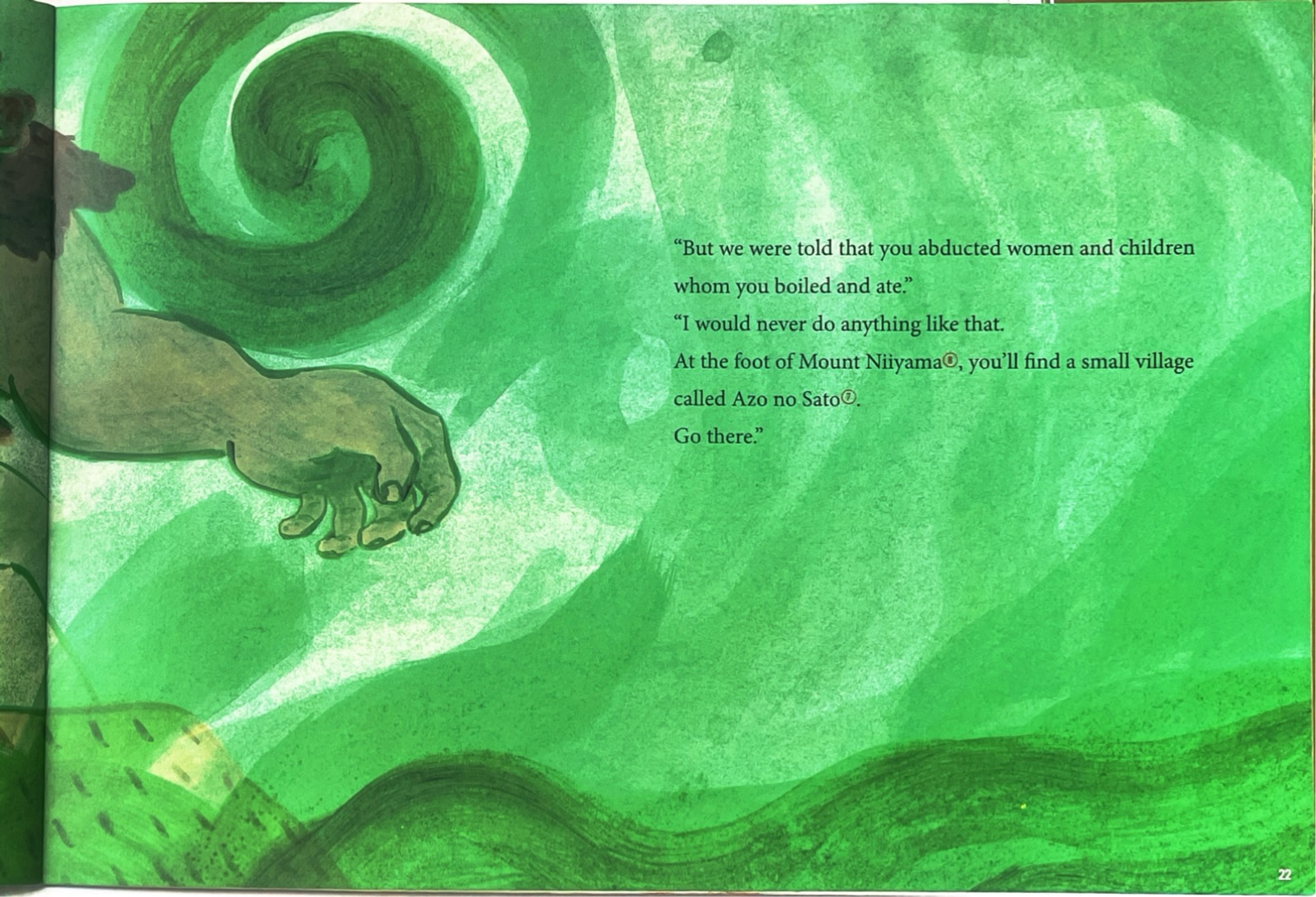
At that moment, Momotaro was reminded of the time
he shot the two peaches simultaneously.
Momotaro placed his arrows on top of the Yaokiiwa③ stone,
placed his hand on the peach pit by his chest,
and started to pray.
Then, he slowly took out two arrows, positioned them
on the bow and released them with all his might.
One arrow fell into the ocean
but his other arrow skillfully pierced Ura's left eye.
Chisuigawa river turned red with the blood that
flowed from Ura's eye.

Ura raised his two hands in the air and kicked his feet forcefully.
At that moment, to everyone's astonishment,
he transformed into a bright red pheasant and flew away
deep into the mountains.
Momotaro also transformed into a hawk and chased after him.
Just as he was about to catch the red pheasant,
this time the ogre transformed into a carp and jumped into Chisuigawa river.

Not giving up, Momotaro transformed into a
cormorant and pursued the carp.
He caught the carp and forcefully chewed up its body.
The carp's body was deeply gouged
and it finally lost its strength⑤.
When the carp washed up on Akahama (red shore),
Ura had returned to his original form.
Momotaro cut off Ura's head,
pierced it with a thick stake and left it
on top of a tree in Kobe Village.

Ura's head that was left up in the tree groaned,
"Errrrrh, errrrh, errrh," every night for many years after.
The villagers who feared that Ura still held a grudge
whispered to each other,
"I wonder if he still hasn't overcome his sense of resentment?"
"He's wailing out of sadness."
Momotaro then dug a deep hole in the ground under the clay oven
at Kayabukinomiya③ at the foot of Mount Nakayama and buried
Ura's head there permanently.
Doing so, however, did not stop his eerie nocturnal wailings.

One night several years later,
Ura appeared in Momotaro's dreams.
"Momotaro, I am not an ogre."
In the dream, Ura told him the following story.
He was a Prince of Kudara Province in
the Korean Peninsula.
After losing a battle with a neighboring
province, he escaped to Kibi Province together
with his comrades.
When their ship drifted to Kibi no Anaumi,
the fishermen mistook them for ogres and
began to attack them.
They had no choice but to escape to the
mountains where they built their homestead⑩
on top of Mount Niiyama④.



"But we were told that you abducted women and children whom you boiled and ate."

"I would never do anything like that.

At the foot of Mount Niiyama⑥, you'll find a small village called Azo no Sato⑦.

Go there."

Upon arriving in Azo no Sato⑦, Momotaro met a boy named Azo
who told him, "Ura saved my life."
He told him that when he was a small child, Ura had saved him
from a bear that was about to attack him at Mount Niiyama⑧.
Since then, he went to visit Ura regularly.
When he offered him gifts of food on his visits,
Ura thanked him with hoes, spades, harpoons, weights and other tools
for farming and fishing that he had fashioned by hand out of iron.
Azo distributed these tools to the villagers.
At first, the villagers shunned these gifts, saying,
"These tools were made by ogres. They make our skin crawl."
But gradually, people began accepting them.
Once they started using the tools made by Ura which
were far superior to anything they had been using before,
it helped to get their work done much faster.

Azo's older sister, Azohime, who began accompanying her brother on his visits to Mount Niiyama⑧ also became friends with Ura.

"Ura told me that the millet dumplings that I make are his most favorite thing in the world," boasted Azohime to her brother, and she made large amounts of these dumplings and eagerly delivered them to Ura.

...As time went on, Ura and Azohime fell deeply in love with each other.

"Ura, you've never once come down the mountain.
I'd like you to come visit our village."

"But the people of Azo no Sato⑦ believe I'm an ogre and are afraid of me, aren't they?"

"No. Now everyone is using the tools that you made for them and is grateful to you."

Ura and Azohime made vows to be husband and wife.

The villagers were very pleased about the marriage.

After hearing the whole story from Azo, Momotaro reproached himself bitterly.
"I had snatched away a person who was very dear to Azohime and Azo
and robbed Kibi no Province of their light of hope."
As if in answer to Momotaro's mournful cries,
Ura's voice came out of nowhere and said the following,
"Momotaro, you finally know the truth."
"Ura, is that you? How you must resent me."
"I don't. You shot me down to protect the peace of Kibi Province.
My wish for the happiness of the people of this province are as strong as yours."
"You were also trying to protect something that was important to you."
"Yes, I was. If we had met under different circumstances,
I'm sure we could have become very close friends."
"We have suffered an ironic fate."

Momotaro repented of his sins, and asked Ura
if there was anything he could do for him.
"I have one request. Please ask Azohime to take the role of
lighting the oven here in Kayabukinomiya③ where I am buried.
That way I can always protect my wife from where I am.
I will give you signs to foretell the fate of the world.
The iron pot will ring out in a rich tone in times of good fortune,
and drone in a coarse tone in times of calamity;
this will show people the way along the path of life③."
"I understand. I will follow your dying wishes and devote the rest
of my life to ensuring the happiness of the people in this province.
As proof, I will adopt the two characters 吉備 (Kibi)
and call myself Kibitsuhiko from this day forward."
"Kibitsuhiko, huh? I will keep watch of your efforts from here."

After changing his name to Kibitsuhiko, Momotaro kept his promise to Ura and devoted the rest of his life to protecting the prosperity and peace of Kibi Province.

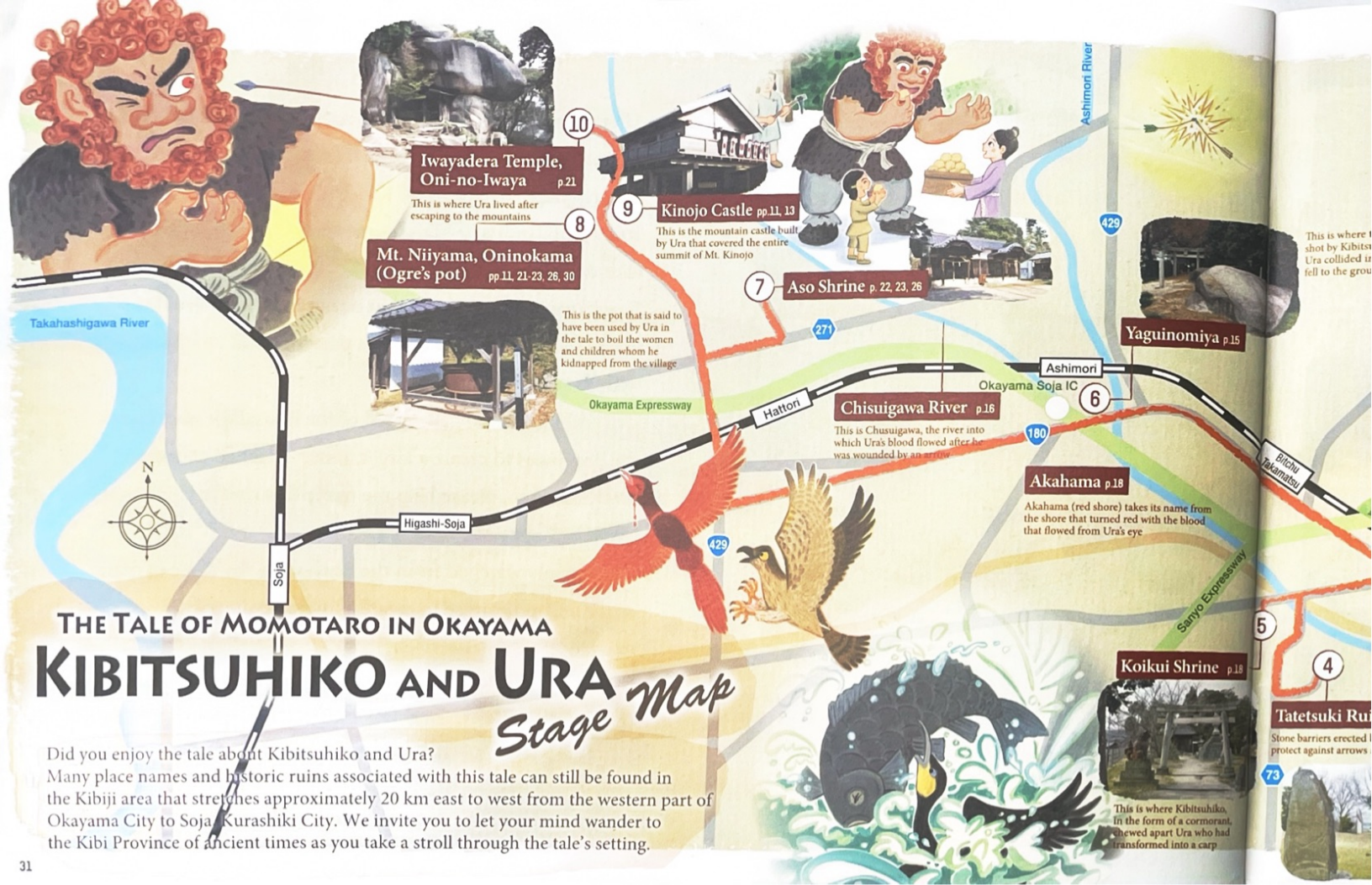
Today, Kibitsuhiko is standing at the top of Mount Niiyama[8] with Azohime and Azo.

"Look over there. Beyond that ocean is Yamato Province where I was born. One day this province will be unified with Yamato Province.

Ura and I dream of getting rid of the boundaries between the provinces to create a larger, more enriched country. Azohime, Azo, please help me make that dream come true."

"We'd be happy to."

Ura warmly watched from the heavens as the three of them made a firm promise to create a unified country.


Iwayadera Temple, Oni-no-Iwaya p.21
This is where Ura lived after escaping to the mountains
Mt. Niiyama, Oninokama (Ogre's pot) pp.11, 21-23, 26, 30
This is the pot that is said to have been used by Ura in the tale to boil the women and children whom he kidnapped from the village
Kinojo Castle pp.11, 13
This is the mountain castle built by Ura that covered the entire summit of Mt. Kinojo
Aso Shrine p. 22, 23, 26
Takahashigawa River
Ashimori River
Yaguinomiya p.15
Okayama Soja IC
Okayama Expressway
Hattori
Chisuigawa River p.16
This is Chusuigawa, the river into which Ura's blood flowed after he was wounded by an arrow
Akahama p.18
Akahama (red shore) takes its name from the shore that turned red with the blood that flowed from Ura's eye
Bitchu Takamatsu
Higashi-Soja
Soja
Sanyo Expressway
Koikui Shrine p.18
This is where Kibitsuhiko, in the form of a cormorant, chewed apart Ura who had transformed into a carp
Tatetsuki Rui
Stone barriers erected
protect against arrows
271
429
180
73
N

THE TALE OF MOMOTARO IN OKAYAMA

KIBITSUHIKO AND URA *Stage Map*

Did you enjoy the tale about Kibitsuhiko and Ura?
Many place names and historic ruins associated with this tale can still be found in the Kibiji area that stretches approximately 20 km east to west from the western part of Okayama City to Soja-Kurashiki City. We invite you to let your mind wander to the Kibi Province of ancient times as you take a stroll through the tale's setting.

By car

Half day (6-hour) course

Okayama Soja IC

Approx. 20 min. by car — National Road 180

1 Kibitsuhiko Shrine (30 min)

Approx. 5 min. by car — National Road 180

2 Kibi no Nakayama / 3 Kibitsu Shrine (40 min)

Approx. 15 min. by car — National Road 180 to public road

4 Tatetsuki Ruins (20 min)

Approx. 5 min. by car — Public road

5 Koikui Shrine (20 min)

Approx. 15 min. by car — Public road to National Road 180

6 Yaguinomiya (20 min)

Approx. 15 min. by car — National Road 180 to public road

7 Aso Shrine (20 min)

Approx. 20 min. by car — Public road

8 Mt. Niiyama, Oninokama (Ogre's pot) (20 min)

Approx. 5 min. by car — Public road

9 Kinojo Castle (40 min)

Approx. 5 min. by car — Public road

10 Iwayadera Temple, Oni-no-Iwaya (20 min)

This is where the arrows shot by Kibitsuhiko and Ura collided in the air and fell to the ground

Bitchu Matsuyama

Kibitsu

180

Bizen-Ichinomiya

Kibiji bicycle trail

1 Kibitsuhiko Shrine

2 Kibi no Nakayama p.13

This is where Kibitsuhiko, who was dispatched to defeat Ura, built his camp

3 Kibitsu Shrine
Yaokiiwa, Okamaden pp.16, 20, 28

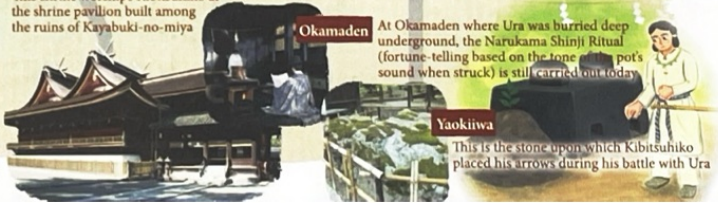
This shrine worships Kibitsuhiko at the shrine pavilion built among the ruins of Kayabuki-no-miya

4 Tatetsuki Ruins p.13

Stone barriers erected by Kibitsuhiko to protect against arrows shot by the enemy

Okamaden

At Okamaden where Ura was buried deep underground, the Narukama Shinji Ritual (fortune-telling based on the tone of the pot's sound when struck) is still carried out today



Yaokiiwa

This is the stone upon which Kibitsuhiko placed his arrows during his battle with Ura

1 Kibitsuhiko Shrine

The deity of worship at this shrine is Okibitsuhiko-no-mikoto. Bizen-Ichinomiya, the most important shrine in Bizen, was built when Kibi Province separated into Bizen, Bitchu and Mimasaka. This shrine provides valuable records in temple and shrine construction such as the Sangeninhanagare-zukuri and Hiwadabuki architectural styles and the tortoise-shaped platform made of granite, and it is also highly regarded for the beauty of its shrine pavilions. The Otaue Festival held here every August is a traditional event that has been passed down since before the Kamakura Period.

Location: 1043 Ichinomiya, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 20 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

2 Kibi no Nakayama p.13

This is the mountain that appears in the Kokinshu tanka poem: "What a pure sound the narrow valley rivulet makes as it winds about like a kimono sash on the Kibi no Nakayama in iron-smelting Kibi." The mountain spreads out elegantly like a kimono with Kibitsu Shrine and Kibitsuhiko Shrine on each of its sleeves. With an elevatin of 162 m, at the south tip is the Chausuyama imperial tomb in which lies four shoguns and Kibitsuhiko-no-mikoto.

Location: Kibitsu, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 20 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

3 Kibitsu Shrine (Yaokiiwa, Okamaden) pp.16, 20, 28

Worshipped here is Okibitsuhiko-no-mikoto as the main deity, along with the heroes of the Kibi clan. With the main shrine measuring approximately 264.5 m² and the worship hall measuring approximately 79.3 m², this is one of the largest shrines in Japan. The elegant Hiyokuirimoya-zukuri architecutral style, also called Kibitsu-zukuri, has been designated as a national treasure of Japan. In the tale of Ura, this is the location where Kibitsuhiko-no-mikoto took up position for battle in accordance with an order from the Imperial Court.

Location: 931 Kibitsu, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 15 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

4 Tatetsuki Ruins p.13

With an overall length of approximately 80 m, and a mound measuring approximately 40m in diameter, this is Japan's largest Yoyoi Funkyubo burial mound in the third century preceding the Kofun Period. In light of the discovery of the iron swords, necklaces and a large amount of cinnabar which was a valuable commodity during that period, the deceased is said to have been a powerful and influential member of society in the first half of the third century. In the tale of Ura, the five flat boulders on the mountain summit are said to be the stone barriers that provided protection against Ura's arrows.

Location: Shoshin-machi Hibata, Kurashiki-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 14 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

5 Koikui Shrine p.18

Worshipped here are Ura and Sasamorihiko-no-mikoto, one of Kibitsuhiko's retainers. It is said that Emperor Nintoku built this shrine as one of the subordinate shrines to Kibitsu shrine. In the tale of Ura, when Ura transforms into a carp and escapes into the Chisuigawa river, Kibitsuhiko-no-mikoto chases after Ura in the form of a cormorant, and this is said to be the spot where the cormorant chews apart the body of the carp.

Location: 109 Yabe Kurashiki-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 10 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

6 Yaguinomiya p.15

The distance between Kibitsu Shrine and Kinojo Castle is about 10 km as the crow flies. Since Yaguinomiya is approximately in the middle between the two points, this spot is said to be where the arrow shot by Kibitsuhiko and the stone thrown by Ura fell. According to legend, the granite boulder called "Yagui no Iwa" situated on the shrine grounds is the one thrown by Ura.

Location: Takatsuka, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 1 minute by car from Okayama Soja IC

7 Aso Shrine pp.22, 23, 26

Aso Shrine is located in Asonogo, the name given to the entire Chisuigawa river basin area where Japan's oldest remains of iron manufacturing was unearthed in great numbers. The iron pot used in the Narukama Shinji ritual at the Kibitsu Shrine has been supplied for generations by iron casters in Asonogo, showing the strong ties between Kibitsu Shrine and Azo village of iron connected with Ura.

Location: 96 Okusaka, Soja-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 15 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

8 Mt. Niiyama, Oninokama (Ogre's pot) pp.11, 21-23, 26, 30

This iron pot, approximately 1.8 m in diameter and 1 m in depth, can be found by the side of the mountain road in the climb up to Kinojo Castle. This pot is said to be the one used by Ura to boil his victims alive, but the more widely held theory is that in the Kamakura Period, Chogen, the Japanese monk, used the pot as a bath for the common people and also to cook rice to feed the people in times of disaster. The pot is made from locally-sourced iron produced in Azo, Soja city, which indicates how rich in iron this region used to be.

Location: Kuroo, Soja-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 17 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

9 Kinojo Castle pp.11, 13

It is said that Ura lived in seclusion in this mountain castle which stands on the summit of Mt. Kinojo (altitude 400 m). The walls which enclose the inner castle covers an area of approximately 30 hectares, making it one of the largest in Japan. The castle has four gates, and in the inner castle are remains of a building on foundation stone which probably served as food storage, water gates, and a drainage well (a place to draw water).

Location: Okusaka, Soja-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 18 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

10 Iwayadera Temple, Oni-no-Iwaya p.21

This Shingonshu sect temple is located in a section along the chain of mountains approximately 3 km north of Kinojo Castle. In the mountain behind the temple is a granite cave called Oni-no-Iwaya. In the tale of Ura, this is where Ura lived, and according to one theory, Ura's torso is buried in the "Imperial Tomb" situated in the cemetery.

Location: Okusaka, Soja-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 25 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

Please direct inquiries regarding sightseeing information to: Momotaro Tourist Information Center Tel.: 086-222-2912

Intertwining of History and Myth

Kibiji Area Sightseeing Map

This area is not only the setting of a tale! Kibiji is surrounded by burial mounds and historic ruins that are of national value, places linked to great people in history, and many other fascinating sightseeing spots. The beautiful scenery of each of the four seasons is filled with a sense of nostalgia and is also a part of the area's charm.

Recommended sightseeing spots around Kibiji

11 Bitchu Takamatsu Castle Ruins

Takamatsu Castle fell, along with Shimizu Muneharu the lord of the castle who killed himself, after a water siege laid by Hashiba Hideyoshi (Toyotomi Hideyoshi) under the orders of Oda Nobunaga. The inner citadel ruins, where the tomb for Muneharu's severed head lies, is now maintained as a historic park. The reference libraray located within the park displays various data and information.

Location: 558-2 Takamatsu, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 10 min. from Okayama Soja IC

12 Saijo Inari

This shrine which is famous for prayer offerings is considered one of the three great Inari shrines in Japan. With a picturesque view of the Kibi Plain, the shrine is said to have been built approximately 1,250 years ago by Hoon Daishi. Although Saijo Inari is a temple, it has a Shinto torii gateway and a shrine-style main building allowing syncretistic fusion of Shintoism and Buddhism. The temple draws many vistors who come to pray for blessings such as for success in business, traffic safety, and academic success.

Location: 712 Takamatsu Inari, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 10 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

13 Birthplace of Ogata Koan

Ogata Koan (1810-1863) was a scholar of Dutch studies and an educator in the latter half of the Edo Period. He was born in Ashimori as the third son of Saeki Koreyori, a samurai of the Bitchu Ashimori-han. When he was 29, while he practiced medicine, he built a school in Osaka called Tekitekisaijuku where he taught many students including Fukukawa Yukichi and Omura Masujiro. Buried underneath the commemorative plaque erected in the ruins of Ogata Koan's birth home, are his umbilical cord and hair.

Location: Ashimori, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 10 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

14 Omizuen Park

This Kobori Enshu-style garden constructed around a pond is located in the former residence of Lord Kinoshita of the Ashimori-han. The pond and garden are arranged in a simple layout with maple trees, cherry trees and hackberries that are hundreds of years old surrounding the pond, and two small islands, Tsuru-shima and Kame-shima, skillfully positioned in the pond. This garden is a place where people come to relax and enjoy the changing scenery of the four seasons, and large numbers of people visit the garden during the cherry blossom, fall foliage and peony seasons.

Location: 803 Ashimori, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 10 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

15 Former Ashimori-han Samurai Residence

This is the former residence of the Sugihara family, chief retainer of the Ashimori-han. Enclosed by a white nagayamon gate and mud walls, this residence, built in the Buke-shoin-zukuri style of architecture, is said to be the prototype of modern-day Japanese architecture. After the Meiji Restoration, many samurai residences rapidly disappeared, but this residence has been well kept and is considered an extremely valuable building that conveys the way of life of a samurai family.

Location: 752 Ashimori, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 10 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

16 Birthplace of Sesshu

Sesshu, a master painter who is famous for his anecdote about painting a picture of a mouse with his tears after being scolded and tied to a pillar in the temple by a Buddhist priest, was born in Akahamamura, Bitchu (present day Soja City, Okayama Prefecture) in 1420. A monument has been erected in his birthplace to commemorate the genius painter.

Location: Akahama, Soja-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 3 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

17 Tsukuriyama Burial Mound

This is an enormous keyhole-shaped burial mound from the mid-Kofun Period. It is the fourth largest burial mound in Japan in terms of its length, and the largest ancient burial tomb in Japan that allows people to enter. As there have been no official academic investigations conducted up to now, the site has not been excavated, but judging from the size of the burial mound, it is believed that the deceased was a paramount chief who contributed to the unification of the entire Kibi region.

Location: Shinjoshimo, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 10 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

18 Senzoku-soshoku Burial Mound

This is the largest subordinate burial mound where people who committed suicide to follow their lords buried at the Tsukuriyama Burial Mound were entombed. Measuring 74 m in length, this keyhole-shaped burial mound was built in the latter half of the fifth century. The mound is called a Soshoku burial mound due to the Chokkomon decorative scheme on the front of the burial chamber and the Kaginotemon design on the upper side. Archeological findings at this site include a mirror, comma-shaped beads, small beads, sword and armor. (The stone decorations that are of national value to Japan are presently under repair).

Location: Shinjoshimo, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 10 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

19 Bitchu Kokubunniji Ruins

This is the ruins of a convent built in Bitchu Province at the wish of Emperor Shomu during the Nara Period. The temple covers an area of 108 m east to west and 216 m north to south. Within the temple grounds which is enclosed by a tile-roofed mud wall, the buildings for worship are arranged in a straight line from south to north starting with a south gate, inner gate, main hall, worship hall and so on. The ruins, including the foundation stone for the main hall, have been preserved in good condition to this day.

Location: Kanbayashi, Soja-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 14 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

20 Komori-zuka Burial Mound

This keyhole-shaped burial mound with an overall length of 100 m was built in the latter half of the sixth century using a hill that was formed in nature. The internal ancient tomb is a vertical stone chamber made using enormous boulders that form a long dromos and a burial chamber in the back which holds a large house-shaped stone coffin. The stone coffin is made from the Namigatawa (shell limestone) from Nogami-cho, Ibara-shi.

Location: Kanbayashi, Soja-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 15 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

21 Bitchu Kokubunji Temple

This state-sponsored temple was built by the wish of Emperor Shomu in 741 to pray for the protection of the region. After the seven-storied pagoda (estimated to be 50 m high) burned to the ground during the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the five-storied pagoda (34.32 m high) was rebuilt in a different location around 1843. The five-storied pagoda which leaves a strong reminder of the architectural style of the latter Edo Period is the only one of its kind in Okayama Prefecture.

Location: 1046 Kanbayashi, Soja-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 15 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

22 Bitchu Kokufu Ruins

Under the Ritsuryo legal codes, the administrative offices located in Bizen Province, Bitchu Province and other provinces were regarded as the Kokufu (capitals). To the east of the Kokubuniguchi intersection along National Road 180 stands a stone monument on which is engraved "Bitchu Kokufu Ruins" with another stone monument on the other side for the Goshomiya (Imperial palace). Although the location of Bitchu's Kokufu has not yet been determined, this spot marked "Gosho" is considered a very important site.

Location: Kanaido, Soja-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 3 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

23 Tsukuriyama Burial Mound

This burial mound built in the mid-Kofun Period is said to be the grave of a paramount chief of the ancient Kibi kingdom. Using a small naturally-formed hill, the three-story keyhole-shaped burial mound has an overall length of 282 m, with the circular mound at the rear measuring 170 m in diameter and 24 m in height. Tsukuriyama Burial Mound is the tenth largest of its kind in Japan, and the second largest in Okayama Prefecture following the Tsukuriyama Burial Mound (Shinjoshimo).

Location: Misu, Soja-shi, Okayama-ken
Access: Approx. 15 min. by car from Okayama Soja IC

Kibiji Festivals and Annual Events

- **Kibitsu no Shamisen Mochitsuki** (rice-cake pounding) — Kibitsu Shrine — January 1-3
- **Yatate Shrine Ritual** — Kibitsu Shrine — January 3
- **Ebisu Festival** — Kibitsu Shrine — January 9-11
- **Hatsuumasai Festival** — Saijo Inari — First Sunday in March
- **Kibiji Renge Festival** — Bitchu Kokubunji and vicinity — April 29
- **Genso no Kyoen** — Bitchu Kokubunji Temple grounds — Beginning of May
- **Kibitsu Shrine Shichijugozen Festival** — Kibitsu Shrine — Second Sunday of May and October
- **Miyauchi Odori Dance** (Prefectural cultural asset) — Kibitsu Shrine — July 31
- **Otaue Festival** (Prefectural cultural asset) — Kibitsuhiko Shrine — August 2-3
- **Okayama Momotaro Festival** — Okayama Station and vicinity — Beginning of August
- **Soja Shimin Festival Sesshu Festa** — Soja City Hall and vicinity — Beginning of August
- **Ohitaki Grand Festival** — Saijo Inari — Second Sunday of December and previous day

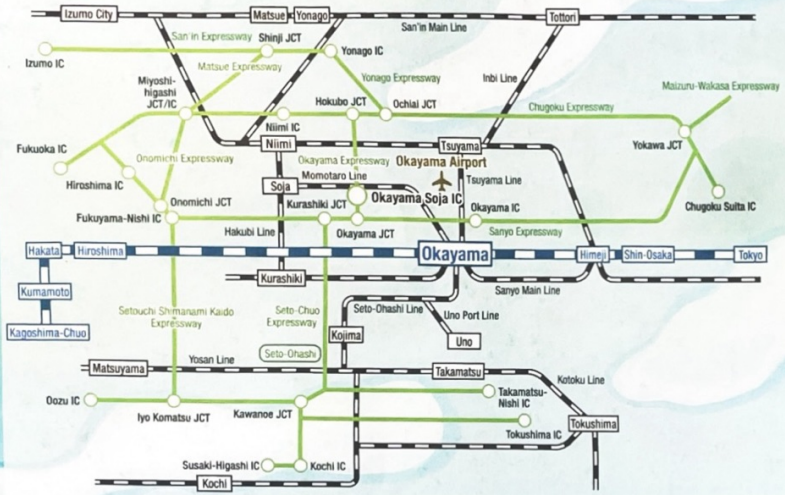
Access Guide

Traveling time to Okayama City by car

- From Osaka: approx. 2 hrs. 10 min.
- From Hiroshima: approx. 1 hr. 50 min.
- From Yonago: approx. 1 hr. 40 min.
- From Kochi: approx. 2 hrs.

Traveling time to JR Okayama Station (using the Nozomi Shinkansen service)

- From Tokyo Station: approx. 3 hrs. 17 min.
- From Shin-Osaka Station: approx. 45 min.
- From Hiroshima Station: approx. 36 min.
- From Hakata Station: approx. 1 hr. 43 min.



Traveling time to Okayama Airport

- From Tokyo: approx. 1 hr. 10 min.
- From Sapporo: approx. 1 hr. 50 min.
- From Okinawa: approx. 2 hrs.
- From Seoul: approx. 1 hr. 35 min.
- From Shanghai: approx. 2 hrs.
- From Taipei: approx. 2 hrs. 45 min.
- From Hong Kong: approx. 3 hrs.

This tale is newly adapted from Atsuko Asano's storytelling performance of *Kibitsuhiko and Ura - Two Men Tied by Fate to Create Kibi Province*, written by Reiko Amura.